

## Strong Marriages Are Built on the Small Things!

Typically, a lot of time, money, and effort are expended in preparing for our wedding. We want everything to be perfect, go smoothly, and be the most memorable event of our lifetime. We worry about the smallest details, spend hours deciding on dresses, colors, flowers, decorations, venue, who to invite, seating arrangements, etc. and the lists goes on. With all the coordination, timing, and pieces to most weddings that must flow together, there is usually something that doesn't go as we planned, and those become the "bonding moments" that we often laugh about and remember for the rest of our lives!



However, in the scope of our entire married life, the wedding fills a very small space in time, especially if you have been married as many years as Sue and I have. Even though at the time it seemed to be the most important thing to us, we look back now after 54+ years of marriage and realize that there is a whole lot more to enjoying our life together than just getting married! I will never trade in the joy, freedom, and excitement we felt when we were just married. But walking together in a loving life-long relationship also requires commitment, faithfulness, forgiveness, give and take, compromise, unconditional love, and lots of prayer!



Some may be thinking that there are other big events in our lives together that have also made our marriage stronger. I will be the first to agree with you that we all walk through many difficult and trying things that impact our hearts and either build up or try to tear down our marriages. And there are also many wonderful and beautiful big events that can enhance our love for each other and strengthen our marriages too. But even though these big events in our marriage may contribute to a stronger marriage, I believe from my own observations and experiences that it is the day-to-day interactions with each other that define and build a strong marriage. It is the strength and depth of those daily ways we deal with life and express love and comfort to each other that really gets us through all the ups and downs of life that couples must navigate and walk through every day.



The positive memories from big events can help us return to joy from difficult situations or big negative emotions, but they probably won't be enough to keep us out of depression, seemingly hopeless circumstances, big hurts, or losses in our life. They are not going to sustain us through extended periods of health issues, family conflicts, work-related problems, or just the boredom from the mundain routines and demands of family life. When the flame or spark in your marriage starts to wane, the memory of those wonderful events from your time together may not be enough to keep the light on or glowing in your marriage. The enemy will use these periods in your marriage to sow seeds of doubt, division, lies, and temptations that will drive a wedge between us, and if left unchecked, eventually destroy our marriage. The memory of our wonderful vacation to Hawaii can still give us great joy, and at times, has helped us resolve a conflict or stop an argument that was going the wrong way. But it is not what keeps us clinging to each other and pressing on through the challenges and difficult periods in our life together. What has helped us, however, is the "knowing" deep down in our heart that my spouse is always there to support and comfort me and is pleased to be with me even in all my messes!



That confidence and "knowing" in our heart has only come from all the little things each day that we do to communicate our love for each other and the unwavering commitment we have to our covenant marriage with each other. Strong marriages don't just happen when we

get married. They come from all the times that we have expressed our love and did the little things without being asked. The list is inexhaustible, but here are a few ideas that come to mind:

- 1) volunteer to do something that your husband or wife normally does without even being asked like dishes, pick up the kids, collect and take out the trash, cook a meal, take care of the kids and give your spouse the chance to go out with friends or go shopping
- 2) give one-minute hugs or just hold your wife when she is dealing with something heavy or painful that has impacted her heart
- 3) buy her flowers or something she likes or wants for no special reason
- 4) just listen when your spouse is upset, frustrated, confused, depressed, angry, feeling shame
- 5) leave notes around the house about how much you love or respect your spouse
- 6) kiss or hug your spouse and tell them you love or appreciate what they are doing for the family – affirm your commitment to them and the family
- 7) plan special times together and talk about what you want to do together in the future



One of Sue and my favorite songs from when we were dating was “I Love How You Love Me” sung the best by Bobby Vinton. It’s the best way to sum up what I have been sharing in this encouragement. Strong marriages are built on the little everyday ways we share our love with each other. Everything that we do to make our spouse feel seen, heard, understood, respected, loved, valued, honored, supported will bring joy to their heart and draw them closer to us. On purpose, spend time every day together focused on each other doing things that bring fun, joy, laughter, and companionship to your spouse.

Be your spouse’s best friend, lover, and partner in everything you do together. What you do together does not have to be big, expensive, time-consuming, hard or difficult; it just needs to be done with love that makes the other person know you are pleased and want to be with them!

**Start today looking for ways to love your spouse every day!**

### **Dialogue Questions**

1. For each of these 5 categories, make a list of 2 or 3 things that would make you feel LOVED RESPECTED UNDERSTOOD VALUED SUPPORTED After each category, tell how that would change your attitude and response towards your spouse if they would do that on a regular basis.
2. What are several little things that I do for you that cause you to be more drawn towards me and feel loved? Describe the positive emotions that you are experiencing with each one.

### ***Fun Night Ideas***

1. Have fun hiding little notes in places where your spouse will find them about what you appreciate about what they are doing for you and/or the family.
2. Take a moon-lit walk holding hands and stopping to give “leaning” kisses to your spouse.
3. Sit in each other’s arms and play some of the music you used to listen to when you were dating before you got married.